



**TESTIMONY OF THE CONNECTICUT JUVENILE JUSTICE ALLIANCE
FOR THE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE MARCH 14, 2016**

**HB NO. 5529 AN ACT CONCERNING SEXUAL OFFENDER REGISTRATION LAWS,
RESIDENCY RESTRICTIONS FOR REGISTERED SEXUAL OFFENDERS**

Senator Coleman, Representative Tong and members of the Judiciary Committee: My name is Abby Anderson; I am the executive director of the Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance. The Alliance is a statewide public policy and advocacy organization dedicated to stopping the criminalization of Connecticut's children. We believe in prevention to keep children from entering the system and best practice and policy to ensure that children who do enter the system are treated safely, fairly, and effectively, so that they can succeed.

The Alliance strongly opposes section 5 of HB 5529, An Act Concerning Sexual Offender Registration Laws, Residency Restrictions for Registered Sexual Offenders. This section calls for including juvenile delinquent offenders on a sex offender registry and relates to the federal Adam Walsh Act.

Like our colleagues in the Office of the Chief Public Defender's Office, the Alliance is opposed to requiring juveniles who are adjudicated delinquent for a crime of a sexual nature, not transferred to and convicted in adult court, to be added to the Connecticut Sex Offender Registry. Section 5 appears to be an effort to insure compliance with the federal Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act, PL 109-248. The requirements in this section are unnecessary and absolutely contrary to the rehabilitative purpose of the juvenile court. The idea that juveniles should be held accountable in a way that allows for redemption has been recognized by the United States Supreme Court as they have outlawed the death penalty and mandatory life without parole for juveniles. Just as public policy and jurisprudence has moved away from the concept that "adult time for adult crimes" is the correct correctional approach, the country is moving away from the idea that children convicted of sexual offenses as juveniles should be subject to permanent registration.

In fact, two states, New York and Texas, have officially informed the Department of Justice that they would not be complying with SORNA. Risa Sugarman, Director of the Office of Sex Offender Management from New York, wrote to the DOJ in 2011: "New York has a long standing public policy of treating juvenile offenders differently from adult offenders so that juveniles have the best opportunity of rehabilitation and re-integration. The federal requirement that juveniles be placed on the Sex Offender Registry under SORNA is in direct conflict with that public policy."¹

In Connecticut, youth 15 or older charged with serious sex offenses (all A and some B felonies) are automatically transferred to the adult system. Prosecutors have the ability to ask for a hearing to transfer youth charged with other felony sex offenses to the adult system. Connecticut system already provides for public protection and rehabilitation of juvenile offenders. The creation of a juvenile sex offender registry in our state is not necessary.

Again, echoing our colleagues from the Office of the Chief Public Defender,

¹ [http://www.ncleg.net/documents/sites/committees/JLOCJPS/2011-12 Interim/October 13, 2011 Meeting/RD_SORNA General Information 2011-10-13.pdf](http://www.ncleg.net/documents/sites/committees/JLOCJPS/2011-12%20Interim/October%2013,%202011%20Meeting/RD_SORNA_General_Information_2011-10-13.pdf)

"Connecticut has never required juveniles adjudicated of sexual offenses to appear on the registry. Both the Department of Children and Families and Judicial Branch, CSSD provide secure and community based treatment for offenders remaining in the juvenile court. This treatment is age appropriate and shown to have the best chance at preventing reoffending. Juvenile registration undermines the essential rehabilitative purpose of the juvenile court and will discourage young people with emerging issues from seeking the treatment and services available in the delinquency system. The social cost of such a policy is high, creating a whole group of young people who, despite being the most amenable to treatment, will be doomed to a life of stigma and economic dependence. Registration for juvenile delinquents is bad public policy, as it leaves the offender with no chance for successful reintegration in to the community-the overarching goal of our juvenile justice system. Requiring registration for children adversely affects their ability to go to school, work, or even live with their families, all factors proven to help decrease recidivism in youth."

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony.

Alliance member organizations:

AFCAMP, Center for Children's Advocacy, Center for Effective Practice / CHDI, Children's Mental Health Connecticut, Connecticut Legal Services, Connecticut Voices for Children, Connecticut Youth Services Association, Community Partners in Action, FAVOR, LifeBridge, Office of the Chief Public Defender, Office of the Child Advocate, RYASAP, The Tow Foundation, The Village for Families and Children